

Layla Frost and Brad G

On a warm Friday night the sun had set and partying had finished, Layla Frost and her boyfriend Brad G cruised down Highway 41 in their shiny black sedan. The music blared from the speakers, a mix of beats and bars that filled the air with excitement. Layla, a talented white female rapper, sat in the passenger seat, her head bobbing to the rhythm. Beside her, Brad G, the confident boyfriend with a quick smile, drove with a firm grip on the wheel. In the backseat was Tela the Great, a rising artist filled with dreams and ambition.

Tela was talking animatedly about her new song. "You guys, it's going to be fire! I can't wait for everyone to hear it. It's all about rising from the ashes, you know? Like a phoenix!" Her eyes sparkled with passion as she shared snippets of the lyrics she had penned down in her notebook.

Brad glanced at Layla, then back at Tela. "That sounds dope! But tell us, what makes this song different from the last one?"

Tela leaned forward, her excitement contagious. "This one has a darker vibe! I want to show people the struggle that comes with success and the fears that haunt me at night. It's gonna hit hard!"

Layla laughed, pushing some strands of her dark hair behind her ear. "I can relate. My battles inspire my music too. But tell us, have you thought about how to promote

it? You should totally drop it at the upcoming underground scene show."

As they drove, the conversation flowed, light and easy, until they approached Tela's condo. The building stood tall, illuminated by the soft glow of street lights. They parked right in front.

"Thanks for the ride, you guys! I really appreciate it. This new song is going to change everything for me!" Tela grabbed her things and opened the car door, her enthusiasm barely contained.

"Anytime!" Layla replied, a hint of pride in her voice.

As Tela walked away, Brad leaned toward Layla, a grin forming on his face. "You know that song? The one she's all hyped about? I've heard it before."

Layla raised an eyebrow. "Really? Where?"

Brad chuckled, glancing around to ensure no one was listening. "You remember that party last month? We kinda... borrowed it. Just made a few tweaks. You know how the game is."

Layla's smile faded, replaced by a strange energy in the air. "You what? That's... that's not cool, Brad. What if she finds out?"

Brad shrugged, waving his hand dismissively. "Relax, it's not like we're the first, and the last I heard, artists steal

from each other all the time. Besides, she doesn't have to know. Just imagine if we drop the remix first."

Suddenly, a chill ran through Layla's spine. The air felt heavy, like a storm was coming. She looked out the car window and saw something moving in the dark shadows behind Tela's condo, though she couldn't quite make it out. A sudden shiver washed over her.

"Let's get out of here," Layla said, her voice just above a whisper.

Brad laughed again, clearly unfazed. "You're paranoid. It's just the night playing tricks on you."

But as they began to reverse out of the parking space, Layla couldn't shake off the creepy feeling. "Seriously, Brad. We shouldn't be doing this to her. What goes around comes around, you know?"

"Stop with the moral stuff, Layla. It's all about making it in this game." He backed up, steering down the quiet street.

As they drove, the shadows outside seemed to dance, whispering secrets amongst themselves. Layla glanced at her rearview mirror and caught a glimpse of a figure standing near the entrance of the condo. It looked like Tela, but there was something off about her posture. It was too stiff, too unnatural.

"Did you see that?" Layla gasped, pointing.

“See what?” Brad didn’t even slow down. “You’re seeing ghosts now?”

“No, seriously! Something’s wrong!” Layla's heart raced as they moved further away, but Brad just laughed, shaking his head as they sped up.

But the laughter wasn’t just coming from Brad. Layla felt the weight of another presence in the car, an echo of laughter that filled every corner. She could hear a quiet chorus chanting close to her ear, almost playful yet eerie. The shadows outside grew longer, twisting and morphing into sinister shapes.

Suddenly, a loud bang sounded from the back of the car, making them both jump. Layla froze, her eyes wide. She turned around. “What was that?”

Brad spat out nervous laughter. “Probably just a bump on the road or something. Nothing to worry about.” But he was losing his confidence, glancing at the empty back seat.

As they drove deeper into the darkness, the atmosphere thickened until it felt suffocating. The laughter from outside grew louder, morphing into whispers—frantic, sharp whispers that clawed at Layla's mind.

Brad tightened his grip on the steering wheel. “What the hell is happening?” he asked, anxiety creeping into his voice.

“I think... I think we made a mistake.” Layla’s voice trembled, the reality of their choice settling in.

“Layla,” Brad’s voice was now serious, “if we don’t stop this, we might not make it out tonight.”

With every mile, the feeling of dread deepened, and Layla feared that they weren't just running from music theft but from something far more sinister lurking in the shadows of Highway 41, waiting to reclaim what was wrongfully taken.